



*Release date: November 14, 2000*

*For more information contact: Mike Talbot*

*Phone: (509) 376-5632*

## **DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY COMPLETES FIRE REPORT**

An investigation into the U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) response to this summer's 24 Command Wildland Fire concludes that the Hanford Fire Department and other emergency responders were proactive and highly successful in attacking the fire. The report on the June 27 - July 1, 2000 blaze that occurred on and around Hanford lands also points out areas for improvement. It covered only Hanford-specific emergency response actions for DOE-RL and the DOE Office of River Protection.

"The results of this investigation reveal an outstanding effort by Hanford Site emergency response organizations," said Keith A. Klein, DOE-RL Manager. "While we have found numerous areas where we can make improvements, the overall fire response successfully prevented serious injury or loss of major structures on the Hanford Site, and protected the public and the environment."

Key positive conclusions of the investigation included the immediate and proactive actions to protect site employees, the deployment of Hanford Fire Department firefighters to protect facilities and waste management areas, and the sound preventative fire planning and execution. The investigation team determined there were no substantial gaps in management systems or the emergency preparedness infrastructure.

The team did identify some general areas where suggested improvements would benefit future fire fighting efforts based on the lessons learned in fighting the fire. These are categorized as "judgments of need" and include:

- DOE should evaluate and strengthen existing emergency response processes related to Hanford events affecting state and national systems, as well as evaluating responses necessary due to state and national events affecting Hanford systems.
- DOE should review and revise site wide and long-term emergency and recovery operations, including emergency communications and resource readiness.

- DOE should improve the corrective action management system to ensure improvements are made.

"DOE and its contractors invest considerable time and resources preparing for emergencies at Hanford, and the emergency response in this case was commendable," Klein said. "We should never be satisfied and will always strive to improve. This report will assist us in doing that. This will not be the last fire we have to fight at Hanford and I expect our emergency managers to use this report to make us even better prepared for the future."

Additionally, the DOE is expected to announce shortly several initiatives designed to improve and strengthen fire protection and response at each of its facilities nationwide. As one of the largest landowners in the U.S. it is important that DOE constantly strive to enhance its emergency preparedness and fire fighting capabilities.

The full report can be viewed on the Internet on the Hanford Home Page at the following address: <http://www.hanford.gov/hanfordfire.html>. Copies of the report are available for viewing at the DOE Public Reading Room in the Consolidated Information Center at Washington State University Tri-Cities.

###

RL 01-009

**Historical Note:** The U.S. Department of Energy's Richland Operations Office manages the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State. Hanford was established during World War II as part of the top secret Manhattan Project to produce plutonium for nuclear weapons. Weapons material production was halted in the late 1980s. The Hanford Site is now engaged in the world's largest cleanup effort to deal with the legacy of radioactive and hazardous wastes that resulted from the plutonium production era. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology regulate Hanford's cleanup program under a long-term compliance contract called the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement sets the framework and timelines on the cleanup work so that Hanford meets environmental standards. Hanford cleanup is focused on three outcomes: restoring the Columbia River Corridor for other uses, transitioning the Central Plateau to long term waste treatment and storage, and preparing for the future.

---

[\[Hanford Home Page\]](#) [\[Press Index\]](#)

---

*For questions or comments about this page, please send email to [michael\\_l\\_talbot@rl.gov](mailto:michael_l_talbot@rl.gov)*